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9発明の名称 真空薄膜処理装置

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1. 発明の名称

天空界级机理基础

2.特許請求の報酬

3. 発明の辞組な説明

本発明はスパックリングにより、同一形状の多 数の板状形体になっと自動的に耐吸を形成するス パック仮図の構造に関するものである。更に具体 的には、本見明はスパッタ装置の保守に起因する 装置のダウンタイムを短かくし、装置運転の会時間に占める正珠の生態時間の比率を大きくとることのできるスパッタ装置の構造に関するものである。

- 共同昭60-238479(2)

既ではじめてロードロック虫と処理虫の間の仕切 弁が同を、それぞれの容器の間を垂体が移送され るようになっている。

一般的には、妥当な価格の製電を妥当な経費で 選転することが行なわれ、ひしろ足割的に処態室 の其空を破壊し根柢的に保守作業を行なっている 保守作業の内容としては、消耗した古いターグッ

ト材の新品との交換、タライオポンプの再生によ る辨似能力の凶視、容姿丹に付着したスペッチ祭 の象去、ウェーハ杉送板構扱館の再調整等が含ま れる。保守作業後、天空処理宣は閉ぢられ将び投 気されるが、点初述べたよう化、原定の品質の体 膜を得るためには処理量の不能物ガス分圧を充分 低くするととが必要で、生質に人る前に充分を辨 気。ペーキング。ブリスパックリングなど長時間 の子偏幾作が行われたければならない。クェーハ 上に得談を作製する正殊の生食時間と、それ以外 の基盤の運転時間、即ち事故により装置が停止し た時間とこれを存在する時間とあらかじめ計画さ れた定期的な保守作業の時間とその後の生産開始 までの子偏接作に受する時間の合計時間の調合は 鉄缸の構成と使用部品の信頼性、鉄道を選転しま 九保守作業を行う作業者の操作、作業の遺否、黙 練収。作製すべき裏に要求される特性の難易の程 度等。名徴委囚の影響を受ける。しかし如何なる スパック袋蔵にかいても、保守作業とそれに続く 生投資間のための予備製作の時間が全体の時間に 占める割合は相当大きい。例えば現在用いられている典型的なスペッタ級似では、約33時間をかけて2,000枚のウェーハを処理すると、その都の処理を破壊し、ターグット交換を含むで、保守作業を行うが、保守作業を含めて次の生世の場合では4時間以上を気やしている。また別のスペッタ級似では約100時間かけて5,600枚のウェーハの処理するとその都度次の生世としている。

本希男の目的は上述の問題を解決するスペック 装置を提供することである。即ち、スペック装置 退転の全時間に占める正味の解膜作数時間の割合 を大きくてきる新規の装置の提供を目的とするも のである。

さて、その寒眩の妖妖を述べると、 この不発明 にかいては一つの其空神疾処理袋取の内部だ同じ 機能の存棄処理象を収数値優える。 せして疾患が 血なに致動している間は、 その中の前1 の処理を て神風の処理が行なわれ、 他の処理をは処理のためには使用されない。次に所足の計画時間の形質

特局電60-238479(3)

処理作業が終り、新しの処理室の処理を停止して その其空を彼り前述の保守作業を設す設備に立る と、解膜処理をすべき基体は級透経路を変更して 第2の処理皇に迅り込まれ、そとて処理が開始さ れる。そして、茶2の処理室で処理が行なわれる のに並行して、第1の処理室内では定期的保守作 果が行われ、それに続いて必要を開始するための 予備操作が行われる。との定期的保守作業と予備 受作に父やされる時間は、一般に混し、祟 2 の名 処理異が迷状作業に耐える時間よりは思いので、 新2の処理量がその処理を停止して保守すべる時 別に進したときには既に詳しの処態室では処理を 丹湖できる状態になっている。かく、何じほ館を もつは1の処理盆と第2の処理盆を交互に使用す ることにより、切れ目なく伴続の処理を行うこと ができる。また、との方式によれば子足していた い事故が発生して処理盗を修理せればならぬ場合 が生じた時にも、それ私使用していたかった処理 重の方へ近 想すべき蓄板を送り込み生放を燃択し、 ながら事故を必避することができる。

次に図面により、更に具体的な説明をする。

第1日は、従来方式のスパッタ級数の一例を示す。 図にかいて袋食は、ロードロック盒、各体の中間収納盆20、前処塩盆30、及びスパッタ屋50で構成され、各盆の間に仕切弁21、31、41が設けられている。 各部盤は図示されていまいず

ンプによりそれぞれ独立に排気され其空に維持さ れる。新しい海体はカセット12亿収的されてロ ードロック室の入口11からロードロック室10 化弾人され、また、スパッチリング化より設付処 種が氏んだ妖化でゝから収出される。中間収納室 20代は二朝のカセット22.23が設けられてい る。中間収納金20は、ロードロック金10の第 閉による前処理室30及びスパッチ盤50の実型 の質の劣化を紡止すると共に、未処理基体と処理 終み薪体の 搬送が長配全体の時間当り処理能力を 気住にせず行なわれるよりを役目を栄してかり、 その朝以と役割に関する詳細な説明は、弁政略5 5-[69057及び労政昭55-137802の中代与 えられている。前処理宝30はスパック級作製の 自製版で選体加熱もるいはスパッチェッナング等 の予備的処理を行う役割を果す。基体は、4個の ステージ 26,27,28,29のいずれかの上に配置 させられる。とのうちステージ21は加熱あるい はスパックエッテングに使用され、ステージ29 は希却书に使用できる。ロードロックLIO。中

間収納室20.及び前処壁室30だかける基体の 搬送はベルトを使用した複雑運動と通宜の舶を中心とする饂転運動によって行われるが、それらだ ついては特質昭55-151815、特質昭56-35 743だ評細に設明されている。

スペック室50内では、水平状態の著件42(一点無額)が、90個転して43に示す如くでは 角面状態に保持され、そのままスペック 図30の存在中心に有る角面類301の別図30の 別ででで回転する。とのスペック図30の 別ででで回転する。とのスペック 20のステージである。以はかなアンである。 2により加熱では、4のステージである。 以近代には、4のステージではないステージではない。 以近には、4のステージではないないが、2000には

持同昭60-238479(4)

第2回は本発明によるスパック装置の実施例を示す。本実施例にかいてもロードロック室10、中間収納量20の構造とそれらの内部にかける基体の複迭は前述の従来の場合と全く何じである。 動処理型30をはさんで対象に2個のスパック室 50.51が、それぞれ仕切弁41.41を介して 及けられている。そしていずれか一方のスペッタ 食を使用することにより 軌迹と 阿禄の談付処理が できる。即ち、矢印c . d . α , e , f . g , h 。j。k。mに瓜次白って希休を敷送することに よりスパッタ宣50を用いた処理が行うことがで き、也方で、d'. f . e', f . g', h', j', k', miK収次沿って薪体を敷送することにより、スパ ッメ宜50 を用いた処理を行うことができる。た か前処理盆30のステージ26、27、29は近休 の興宜との間の波送に用い、ステージ28が加熱 あるいはエッナング帯の紅処理化別いられる。先 化迷べた如く、本装置を用いて襲付処理を行って いる間に、仕切弁もじを閉じたままスパップ置5 のを大気開放して内部の併弁化、治其及びメーグ ,ト等の交換などに似する定期保守作菜を行い、 その徒者び其望に挑気して、スパッチ科5 0の保 動計画時間が終了しスペック銀50 化初級える時 別が来るのを待つ。また予期せぬ事故でスパッチ 宜 5 0 を大気に関放せざるを待ねような事態にな

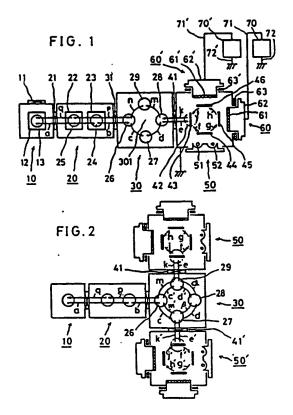
4.図面の簡単な説明

第1回は、従来のスパック装置の構成を示す図。 第2回は、本発明のスパック装置にかける実施例 の構成を示す。

10…ロードロック版 . 20…中間収納起 30…前処態別 . 50…スパッチ別 60 … スパッタ製紙 . 70 … スパック牧祭 13.24.25.26.27.28.29.42.43. 44.45.46 は基体を示す。

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特局名60-238479(5)



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Name of Applicant: ANELVA CORPORATION

SPECIFICATION

1. Title of the Invention:

Vacuum Thin Film Processing Apparatus

2. Claim:

A vacuum thin film processing apparatus, comprising:

a load and lock chamber for storing substrates which can be vacuumed;

processing chambers for implementing a filming process on said substrates in a vacuum; and

a pre-processing chamber disposed between said load and lock chamber and said processing chamber, having a mechanism for automatically transporting said substrates and capable of implementing a pre-processing of said filming process: and

characterized in that said processing apparatus has a plurality of said processing chambers and is constructed so that a transportation path of said substrates between said

load and lock chamber and said plurality of processing chambers can be selected so that the filming process may be implemented on said substrate in at least one processing chamber selected from said plurality of processing chambers.

3. Detailed Description of the Invention:

The present invention relates to a structure of a sputtering apparatus for automatically forming thin films sequentially on a large number of plate substrates having the same shape by sputtering, and more particularly to a structure of a sputtering apparatus which allows to shorten a downtime of the apparatus caused by the maintenance of the apparatus and to increase a rate of net production time in the whole apparatus operating time.

One exemplary field in which the present invention may be applied is a thin film fabricating process in a process for manufacturing integrated circuits. In that process, it is required, for example, to form a metallic thin film and an insulating thin film having a thickness of about 1 μ on a disc-shaped thin silicon wafer having a diameter of about 125 mm and a thickness of about 0.5 mm. Because the lower the partial pressure of impurity gas within a vacuum container, the better the electrical, mechanical and physical characteristics necessary for the thin films to be fabricated may be obtained in general, it is desirable to shorten a time

exposed to the air as much as possible in the processing chamber for fabricating thin films by sputtering. Also for the same purpose, it is necessary not to bring a material body which may cause impurity gas into the processing chamber. Therefore, it is desired to limit a material body which is brought into the processing chamber to what is just necessary for transporting wafers and ideally, an apparatus having a structure by which only wafers on which thin films are fabricated are brought into the processing chamber is Further, it is desirable to automatically desirable. transport wafers without being directly touched by operators as much as possible when they are handled in order to fabricate uniform thin films efficiently on a large volume of wafers. Further, it is necessary to coat the surface of the wafer only by the thin film having a predetermined thickness and it is not desirable to have fine dust mixed therein or to create pinholes or the like where no film is coated. Due to that, it is preferable to hold wafers vertically within the processing chamber so that no dust deposit on the surface of the wafers, even if dust is produced, during the fabrication of the film.

A vacuum system of the sputtering apparatus used for the purpose described above comprises, basically, a processing chamber for fabricating thin films on substrates and a load and lock chamber for inserting substrates before processing

from the air and for conveying the processed substrates to the air. Normally, the processing chamber is kept in a vacuum state in order to keep a partial pressure of impurity gas as low as possible and only the load and lock chamber is exposed to the air and is vacuumed every time when the substrates are brought in and out. A gate valve between the load and lock chamber and the processing chamber is opened only when the load and lock chamber is vacuumed to transport the substrates between each of the containers.

By the way, in considering a production process for processing an extremely large volume of wafers for a long period of time, it is impossible, from the common sense, to operate the sputtering apparatus for the filming process continuously for a long period of time. That is, the apparatus is always stopped by some reasons, causing a need to destroy the vacuum of the processing chamber. Though it is undesirable for the producer, a case when the function of the apparatus cannot be performed by some failure is one reason of the unavoidable stoppage of the apparatus. Although the probability of causing a failure could have been reduced to the degree which causes practically no problem by making various efforts to improve the reliability of the apparatus, it cannot be completely eliminated from the aspects of economy and others.

Rather, an apparatus having an adequate price is

operated with an adequate cost in general and the vacuum of the processing chamber is destroyed periodically to positively perform maintenance works. The maintenance works include a replacement of a wear old target material with new one, recovery of evacuation ability by refreshing a cryopump, removal of sputtered film adhered within the container, readjustment of a wafer transport mechanism, and the like. While the vacuum processing chamber is closed and is vacuumed again after the maintenance works, the partial pressure of the impurity gas in the processing chamber has to be lowered in order to obtain thin films having a certain quality as described before, so that preliminary operations such as full vacuuming, baking, pre-sputtering and the like have to be carried out taking a long time before entering The rate of the net production time for production. fabricating thin films on the wafers and the operating time of the apparatus other than that, i.e. the total time of time during which the apparatus is stopped by the failure, for restoring the apparatus, time of scheduled maintenance works planned in advance and time thereafter necessary for the preliminary operation before starting the production is influenced by various factors such as the structure of the apparatus and reliability of the parts used, propriety of operations and works and skill of the operators operating and maintaining the apparatus, degree of difficulty of obtaining characteristics required for films to be fabricated and the like. However, the rate of the time for the maintenance and for the ensuing preliminary operations for re-starting the production in the whole time is considerably large in any sputtering apparatuses. For example, in the typical sputtering apparatus presently used, while the vacuum of the processing chamber is destroyed and the maintenance including the replacement of the target is carried out every time when 2,000 wafers are processed taking about 33 hours, it takes more than four hours, including the maintenance, before starting the next production. sputtering apparatus requires about 10 hours of maintenance and preliminary operations before the next production every time when 5,600 wafers are processed taking about 100 hours.

Accordingly, it is an object of the present invention to provide a sputtering apparatus which solves the aforementioned problems, i.e. to provide a novel apparatus which can increase the rate of the net time for fabricating thin films in the whole operation time of the sputtering apparatus.

The summary of the apparatus will be described.

According to the present invention, a plurality of thin film processing chambers having the same function is provided within one vacuum thin film processing apparatus. During when the apparatus is normally operated, thin films are

processed in a first processing chamber among them and other processing chambers are not used for the processing. in a stage when thin film processing works of predetermined planned time is finished and the processing in the first processing chamber is stopped to break the vacuum thereof to perform the maintenance work described above, the conveying path for sending substrates to be thin film processed is changed to a second processing chamber and processing is carried out in the second processing chamber. In parallel with the processing in the second processing chamber, the periodic maintenance work is done in the first processing chamber and following that, the preliminary operation for starting another processing is carried out. Because the time consumed for the periodic maintenance work and preliminary operation is generally shorter than the time during which the first and second processing chambers can bear the continuous work, the first processing chamber is ready to start processing again at the point when the time has come to stop processing in the second processing chamber to maintain the chamber. Accordingly, the processing of thin films may be carried out continuously by alternately using the first and second processing chambers having the same function. Further, even when an unexpected failure is caused and the processing chamber has to be repaired, this method allows to repair the failure while continuing the production by sending substrates to be processed to another processing chamber not used till then.

While the case when two processing chambers of the first and second chambers are alternately used has been described in the above explanation, there is practically no trouble in the continuous production by providing two processing chambers having the same function in general. However, the risk of interruption of the production may be lowered to the minimum in cases when the time consumed for the periodic maintenance and preliminary operation is relatively long or when a frequency of causing unexpected failures is high, by providing more than three processing chambers having the same function. However, it increases a volume of the occupied space as a whole apparatus and its price. In considering those points together, an apparatus provided with two processing chambers having the same function and which allows the continuous production is practically preferable. However, the present invention will not particularly limit the number of processing chambers having the same function.

The present invention will be concretely explained hereinbelow with reference to the drawings.

Fig. 1 is a diagram illustrating one example of a prior art sputtering apparatus. In the figure, the apparatus comprises a load and lock chamber 10, an intermediate storage chamber 20, a pre-processing chamber 30 and a sputtering

chamber 50, and gage valves 21, 31 and 41 are provided between each chamber. Each chamber is vacuumed independently by a pump not shown and is kept in the vacuum state. A new substrate is stored in a cassette 12 and is inserted to the load and lock chamber 10 from an inlet 11 of the load and lock chamber 10 and is taken out from there after finishing Provided within the the filming process by sputtering. intermediate storage chamber 20 are two cassettes 22 and 23. The intermediate storage chamber 20 performs roles of preventing the quality of the vacuum in the pre-processing chamber 30 and the sputtering chamber 50 from dropping due to the opening/closing of the load and lock chamber 10 and of conveying non-processed substrates and processed substrates without sacrificing the capacity of the whole apparatus per unit time, and the detailed explanation concerning to the structure and role thereof are given in Japanese Patent Application Nos. 55-169057 and 55-137802. The pre-processing chamber 30 plays a role of implementing preliminary processes such as heating of the substrates and sputter-etching on the pre-stage of the fabrication of the films by sputtering. The substrate is placed on either of four stages 26, 27, 28 and Among them, the stage 27 is used for heating or 29. sputter-etching and the stage 29 is used for cooling, or the like. While the substrates are conveyed through and in the load and lock chamber 10, the intermediate storage chamber 20

and the pre-processing chamber 30 by a linear movement using a belt and a rotary movement centering on an adequate axis, the explanation thereof is given in detail in Japanese Patent Application Nos. 55-151815 and 56-35743.

Within the sputtering chamber 50, a substrate 42 (shown by dashed line) in a horizontal state is rotated by 90° to be held in an almost vertical state as shown by the reference numeral 43 and then is rotated as it is by step of about 90° around a vertical axis 301 which is located almost at the center of the pre-processing chamber 30. A substrate 44 is heated by heating lumps 51 and 52 in a second state in the pre-processing chamber 30 and a filming process implemented on a substrate 45 in a third stage. Similarly, another filming process is implemented on a substrate 46 in Sputtering electrodes 60 and 60' are a fourth stage. provided at the positions facing to the substrates in the third and fourth stage. The sputtering electrode comprises a target 61 and a cathode body 62 and is mounted on the wall of a vacuum container through an intermediary of an insulator 63. A minus high voltage is applied to the cathode body 62 by a sputtering power supply 70 via feed lines 71 and 72 (to earth potential). However, the wall of the metallic vacuum container is grounded by an earth source 81 and is kept in the earth potential. When a gas such as argon is supplied to the sputtering chamber 50 via a gas introducing system not shown, a low voltage gas discharge is caused near the cathode and positive ions hit the target 61 and others, forming thin films by sputtering. In the whole apparatus, the substrate 13 stored in the cassette 12 is stored once in the first cassette in the intermediate storage chamber through a path shown by an arrow a and then is advanced sequentially along arrows b, c, d, e, f, g, h, j, k, m, n and p and is returned to the second cassette 22 in the intermediate storage chamber 20 after the filming process. Then, it is returned again to the original cassette position within the load and lock chamber 10 along an arrow q. This is how the prior art apparatus is operated.

Fig. 2 is a diagram illustrating a preferred embodiment of a sputtering apparatus of the present invention. In the present embodiment, the structure and the conveyance of substrates within the load and lock chamber 10 and the intermediate storage chamber 20 are the totally same with the prior art example described above. However, two sputtering chambers 50 and 51' are provided symmetrically interposing the pre-processing chamber 30 therebetween through the intermediary of gate valves 41 and 41', respectively. Then, the same filming process with that described above may be performed by employing either one sputtering chamber. That is, a process employing the sputtering chamber 50 may be performed by conveying substrates sequentially along arrows

c, d, a, e, f, g, h, j, k and m and another process employing the sputtering chamber 50' may be performed by conveying substrates sequentially along arrows c', d', β , e', f' g', h', j', k' and m'. It should be noted that the stages 26, 27 and 29 in the pre-processing chamber 30 are used to convey the substrates between the neighboring chambers and the stage 28 is used for pre-processing such as heating and etching. As described before, while the filming process is performed using this apparatus, periodic maintenance works such as cleaning of the inside and replacement of jigs and targets is carried out by opening the sputtering chamber 50' to the air while closing the gate valve 41' and after that, the chamber is vacuumed again to be ready for the time when the planned operation time of the sputtering chamber 50 ends and the chamber is switched to the sputtering chamber 50'. Further, even when a situation occurs which compels to open the sputtering chamber 50 to the air due to an unexpected failure, the apparatus may be repaired without interrupting the production for a long time by switching to the sputtering chamber 50'.

While the concrete embodiment of the present invention has been explained above, the present embodiment may be applied not only to the sputtering apparatus but also to many thin film processing apparatuses using vacuum. In particular, a dry etching apparatus, plasma CVD apparatus,

vacuum deposition apparatus and the like are similar to the sputtering apparatus and the quality of vacuum during filming process influences significantly to the performance of the processing. Due to that, although it is taking a quite long time before operating the apparatus after the periodic maintenance and inspection of the processing chamber, the present invention eliminate this idle time to zero. The contribution of the present invention to the improvement of the productivity is very large and it can be said that the present invention is an useful invention industrially.

4. Brief Description of the Drawings:

Fig. 1 is a diagram illustrating a structure of a prior art sputtering apparatus; and

Fig. 2 is a diagram illustrating a structure of a preferred embodiment of a sputtering apparatus of the present invention.

In the drawings, the reference numeral (10) denotes a load and lock chamber, (20) an intermediate storage chamber, (30) a pre-processing chamber, (50) a sputtering chamber, (60) a sputtering electrode, (70) a sputtering power supply, (13, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 42, 43, 44, 45 and 46) substrates.

Patent Applicant: ANELVA CORPORATION